



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 18, 1998

Memorial Day, May 25, and the week that follows, will be marked by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with a series of ceremonies and observances to be held at national cemeteries and other VA facilities.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West, Jr., said, "Our veterans paid dearly to secure our nation's freedom and liberty. Far too many paid the ultimate price. I urge all Americans to join in ceremonies across the nation, or at least to take a moment this Memorial Day to honor our nation's defenders for their patriotism and sacrifice."

The focus of VA's observances will be the department's 115 national cemeteries. Thousands of veterans and family members will gather with local veterans and community organizations for Memorial Day programs, at national cemeteries including:

- Calverton at Riverhead, N.Y.
- Long Island at Farmingdale, N.Y.
- Fort Custer, Mich.
- Quantico, Va.
- Fort Richardson, Alaska
- Fort Logan, Colo.
- Fort Scott, Kan.
- Barrancas, Fla.
- Florida at Bushnell
- Fort Mitchell, Ala.
- Fort Sam Houston, Texas
- Nashville, Tenn.
- New Bern, N.C.
- Fayetteville, N.C.
- Salisbury, N.C.
- Wilmington, N.C.

Many cemeteries will display American flags provided by families of deceased veterans as part of VA's "Avenue of Flags" tradition. Ceremonies and religious services also are planned at many VA medical centers, outpatient clinics and regional benefits offices.

Secretary West has endorsed the national "Moment of Remembrance" campaign, which asks all Americans to pause for one minute of silence on May 25, at 3 p.m. (EDT). The campaign was initiated by No Greater Love, an organization dedicated to paying tribute to those who have died in the nation's defense.

The United States' Memorial Day tradition began with recognition of the war dead after the Civil War, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers. In 1959, Congress proclaimed the day be set aside as a day of prayer for permanent peace in recognition of those Americans who died in service to their country. Memorial Day was observed on May 30 until 1971, when Congress decreed that it be observed

annually on the last Monday in May.